

# Liberals Organize To Push Bills

By ROBERT S. ALLEN  
and PAUL SCOTT



Mr. Allen

The militantly liberal Democratic Study Group is intensifying and expanding its challenge of the influence and control of the party's regular House leaders.

Comprising 142 of the 295 House Democrats, the Study Group not only is duplicating the structure of the regular leadership, but has set up its own staff and operating machinery, is raising its own campaign funds, and formulating its own legislation.

There are backstage indications regular House leaders are far from happy about all this. But there is little, if anything, they can do about it.

With approximately one-half of the Democratic members in DSG ranks, party leaders have to speak softly and tread cautiously. A DSG disaffection of any proportions could be extremely painful.

Graphically illustrative of the liberals' strategic position is the decisive role they played in the House's recent approval of the administration's long-stalled \$12 million rent subsidy appropriation. Virtually all DSG members voted for it, enabling the controversial proposal to skin through the chamber by a hair-line margin.

Top DSG leaders are Representative Frank Thompson Jr., N.J., chairman; Richard Bolling, Mo., member of the powerful Rules Committee and long credited with harboring speakership ambitions; Chet Hollifield, Calif., chairman of the Joint Atomic Committee; John Blatnik, Minn., chairman of a Government Operations subcommittee; Morris Udall, Ariz., brother of the Interior Secretary.

Formally, the five constitute the DSG Executive Committee. In effect, they are the liberals' "phantom" leaders of the House — speaker, floor leader, whips.

Nature and scope of the Democratic Study Group's carefully unpublicized organization and activities are disclosed in the following techniques:

—A comprehensive and aggressive "whip" system that

gets out a maximum DSG vote on all important showdowns. Significantly, when 26 Democratic congressmen recently complained to regular party leaders about their balloting intentions being leaked to lobbyists, DSG members voiced no protest to their leaders. The latter have given assurances voting plans will be kept meticulously confidential.

—Raising a large campaign chest for the re-election of DSG members, of whom more than 40 are first termers swept in by President Johnson's 1964 landslide victory. Chairman Thompson and Representative Bolling are conferring with the Committee on Political Education (COPE), political arm of the AFL-CIO, and the United Auto Workers on electioneering finances.

—Expansion of the DSG research staff under John Morgan, director. To pay for that, members are being assessed \$50 "annual dues." They are also being asked to allocate a small amount of their official clerk-hire for this purpose.

—Cabinet members and other top officials are "invited" to brief DSG members on legislation and issues. Vice President Humphrey addressed the Study Group after his return from the Far East. Others who have done that are Secretary of State Rusk, Agriculture Secretary Freeman, HEW Secretary Gardner, and antipoverty director Shriver. Some committee chairmen have complained to regular House leaders that these officials briefed the DSG before appearing before their committees. The regular leaders don't like it any more than the committee chairmen, but neither can do anything about it. The DSG has the votes and knows it!

—Preparation and distribution among DSG members of "briefing sheets" on all important legislation. Also reports on lobbying operations. Latest of these studies deals with the activities of the "U.S. Association of Television Viewers," which has barraged Congress with mail favoring Community Antenna TV (CATV).